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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 07 BRUSSELS 001566

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SUBJECT: GENERAL HENRI BENTEGEAT SHARES HIS VIEWS AT THE
END OF HIS TOUR

REF: USEU BRUSSELS 716

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Classified By: USEU Political M-C Chris Davis for reasons
1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C//NF) SUMMARY: General Henri Bentegeat welcomed DASD Jim Townsend to his office on 27 October in Brussels for a final meeting before his 4 November departure. The one-hour meeting covered a range of topics. Handing Allied Command Transformation to France was "a bold, great move" said Bentegeat, noting that work between the European Defense Agency (EDA) and ACT was important to the EU. On French reintegration into NATO, he characterized the mood inside the French military as "extremely excited." He lamented that the NATO-EU Military Committee is "almost useless." On the other hand, he noted the utility of Berlin Plus because it designates DSACEUR to act as the "permanent coordinator of EU issues in NATO," which he described as the only way forward, given the political blockage on formal cooperation. On potential solutions to NATO-EU difficulties he warned that "it's not in anyone's interest to isolate Turkey," lamenting

that even when Cyprus is solved, Turkey-Greece still "doesn't work." He announced that in November there will be a single EU representative in Afghanistan, giving the NATO Senior Civilian Representative a sole interlocutor for all EU issues. Describing the European Union Police Mission there he said: "It's still very weak, the numbers are terrible, it won't improve." As for contributions to military operations in Afghanistan, he recounted how military missions in the EU are made up of the remnants left over after NATO has called for forces for ISAF, and therefore, member states would not send combat troops to Afghanistan under the EU that they had not already given to NATO. He reminded everyone that the EU is appropriate only when the threat level is low; when the threat is high, only NATO can go. On civ-mil action, the problem, he said, is that the civ-mil structures cannot work in real time during an operation. To do that, he concluded, requires a permanent civilian-military headquarters. He was happy with how the NATO and EU liaisons and staffs work. His main point was "It is extremely important to keep the Berlin Plus channel open to give DSACEUR a hold on managing NATO-EU," and Bosnia does this; for KFOR in Kosovo, however, "Spain, Greece, Cyprus and Romania don't recognize Kosovo so they don't want to discuss it and they are not willing to talk to NATO about it, period," calling into question the EU's willingness to take the operation over from NATO. END SUMMARY

Genuine Franco-American

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12. (U) General Henri Bentegeat, French Army, Chairman of the EU Military Committee met visiting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy James Townsend in the Chairman's office on 27 October. USEU DOD Adviser Mike Ryan accompanied the DASD. In a wide-ranging conversation, General Bentegeat offered his strongly held views on a broad set of topics, to include relations with the United States and NATO, French re-integration, to include France taking command of NATO's Allied Command Transformation, European defense, the Turkey-Cyprus conundrum, Afghanistan, and an EU operational headquarters.

13. (C) General Bentegeat talked freely about his affinity for Americans, recalling his strong personal and enduring relationship with former SACEUR General Jim Jones, saying he was "very comfortable with Americans, even if ESDP is still a touchy issue."

14. (C//NF) Responding to questions, the general said of NATO and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) that it was "a bold, great move to hand (ACT) over to France" and that it was understandable that the Commander, U.S. JFCOM would move his headquarters to give General Abrial, the new French commander of ACT, his own breathing space. He stopped short of openly lamenting that this created an undesirable distance between NATO and JFCOM, but he indicated he has thoughts on the subject. He continued that work between the European Defense Agency (EDA) and ACT was important to the EU. General Bentegeat noted that since neither organization was yet living up to its potential, their combined work was in everyone's interest. On the capability side, he was clear: having a European lead ACT is a good optic for reassuring European industry that ACT is not biased toward U.S. industry; and he hopes for more concrete and practical accomplishments from these arrangements.

15. (C//NF) On French reintegration into the NATO military command structure, General Bentegeat, a former French Chief of Defense, characterized the mood inside the French military as "extremely excited." He said the newly arrived French officers, "particularly the young ones," are all impressed with NATO's power. The senior officers too are impressed but they are more critical, specifically regarding the perceived

waste in the command structure. He continued that there is a very strong commitment in the General Staff in Paris, which was buoyed by the warm welcome the French officers received everywhere. This surprised them, particularly the enthusiastic reception by American officers.

European defense and the defense of Europe

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16. (C//NF) When asked how recent developments on missile defense and Afghanistan were seen in an EU context, Bentegeat noted that a U.S. briefing to the EU Political & Security Committee and/or Military Committee (MC) would be an important signal, although on missile defense he demurred, citing an EU red line against discussions on territorial defense. He then noted that the NATO-EU MC is "almost useless" given the limitations on its deliberations imposed especially by Cyprus and Turkey, limits which are applied to all NATO-EU formal deliberations among national representatives.

The only way forward...

17. (C//NF) Given the political blockage on formal cooperation, General Bentegeat said the only way that he has found (during his three year tour) to increase political cooperation between NATO and the EU is to use a "small detail of the Nice Treaty" (sic) that designates DSACEUR to act as the "permanent coordinator of EU issues in NATO." He said General McColl works very hard at this, for example in Afghanistan and on Somalia anti-piracy, but it is all "under the table and so it's accepted by Turkey, Greece and Cyprus, which means we can't publicize it." He also noted that he attends the NATO Chiefs of Defense meetings regularly. The most critical NATO-EU problem, he said, is the impossibility of officially exchanging documents, "but staffs do it." In his view, as it's easier for the EU to release documents, the EU sends more documents to NATO than the latter sends back. (COMMENT: Bentegeat evidently referred to DSACEUR's roles as NATO-EU "Strategic Coordinator" as detailed in DSACEUR's TOR and other documents NATO and the EU affirmed in their 2003 "Agreed Framework" (loosely called Berlin-Plus). His comment that NATO-EU staff contacts and document exchanges must be unofficial and invisible recognizes a common practice among those staffs, but is contrary to the NATO-EU document which Turkey has a history of usually accepting, albeit on a strictly case-by-case basis), Bentegeat was adamant that once every couple of months may work, but that it is not in anyone's interest to isolate Turkey and he personally would not want that result. Finally, he lamented that even when Cyprus is

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solved, Turkey-Greece still "doesn't work," and either may block NATO-EU meetings (reftel).

Afghanistan

19. (C//NF) On Afghanistan, General Bentegeat responded in detail to a direct question: "How should we approach the EU on this?" He discussed EUPOL first, the European Union Police Mission: "It's still very weak, the numbers are terrible, it won't improve." Further, he said the French decision to send gendarmes was very harmful for EUPOL, as the dispatching of gendarmes to NTM-A removes any pressure on member states to send them only to EUPOL. He attributed this decision to a French Presidency initiative for domestic reasons: gendarmes are not considered military reinforcements and so can be dispatched without exceeding caps on military

deployments. He continued that there are many European Commission programs that could add important value for the military and for NATO in Afghanistan, but the Commission has still to determine a clear Afghanistan/Pakistan policy. He did pass on some good news saying the EU Special Representative and the Commission's representative would be merged in November into a single function, giving the NATO Senior Civilian Representative a single interlocutor for all EU issues. In his view, this could facilitate real NATO-EU coordination and the concrete possibility of more work together on the ground.

Battlegroups to Afghanistan?

¶10. (C//NF) Asked if there was any possibility of deploying forces from a Battlegroup (BG) to Afghanistan, Bentegeat replied immediately "I've never thought of it." Military missions in the EU, he explained, are made up of "the remnants left over after NATO has called for forces" (he evidently meant particularly for Afghanistan). Therefore, member states would not give combat troops under the EU that they had not decided to give under NATO. Further, using the BG in this way would require a change to the previously-agreed "Battlegroup Concept" that some member states would not accept. Structurally, too, there are problems: first, a BG has limited capability and can only stay deployed for four months maximum. Second, the command and control linkages would need to be changed. Third, the next BG rotation will include a UK/Netherlands BG, and they likely will not send any more forces. Finally, he noted that the EU is appropriate only when the threat level is low; when the threat is high, only NATO can go.

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An EU OHQ? Try a Civ-Mil one?

¶11. (C//NF) In a recent press interview, General Bentegeat discussed his idea for a permanent Civilian-Military Operational Headquarters (OHQ) for the EU. He explained that view. "We have seven OHQs. The best is SHAPE but it can't be used for rapid response. So, we have five national OHQs available plus the Operations Center, which is not serious and will never be used." Next, he noted that permanent civilian-military coordination does not happen in the five standing OHQs, but in Brussels progress has been made in civ-mil pre-operational planning. For example, the Commission is involved at every level. The problem, he said, is that the civ-mil structures cannot effect on tty could be created to support NATO too, although he did not respond to a comment citing this directly to NATO as well as to the EU. Therefore, in his view an EU civ-mil OHQ is the best solution to accommodate the EU's need to coordinate civil and military action in real time. It must be light and small, he asserted (about 200) so it would not duplicate SHAPE. He called this "an idea, not a concept," adding that the idea was his alone and it is "not on anybody's agenda." When comparing it to the Crisis Management Planning Directorate (CMPD), which is nearing activation in the Council Secretariat, he said the

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CMPD's role is pre-operational planning, and the notional civ-mil OHQ is more complex. He also did not foresee a merger between the EU Military Staff (EUMS) and the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC), as the benefits of such a linkage were not in evidence. Bentegeat cited the example of the EU's civilian monitoring mission to Georgia, which was deployed rapidly and on short notice. The EUMS did all the operational planning, according to Bentegeat, as such

a deployment would have been impossible otherwise.
"Civilians don't do rapid planning and deployment," he
concluded.

Tell me again, how does it work?

¶13. (C//NF) Regarding his rejection of SHAPE's potential role
as a rapid response headquarters for the EU, General
Bentegeat was asked about the role of the existing NATO and
EU liaison staffs; i.e., preparing for such a need.
Bentegeat said that when he arrived the liaisons were totally
blocked, "now, they work properly, and they can attend most
meetings." The problem, he asserted, is bureaucratic and
political, citing the six months it took for EULEX and KFOR
to make cooperation arrangements. In this he cited the
negative role of the EU legal service, which he dismissed as
"terrible." As the time was growing short, he re-emphasized
his main message: "It's extremely important to Supreme .

MURRAY

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